

The discussion falls naturally into three divisions—first of all, how does it affect the child? And the answer to this is, to me, instant and conclusive. It is a matter of simple justice to the child. Nearly all men will admit, even the libertines will admit, that a babe should not be held responsible for the wrong-doing of its sire or dam. What has the infant done that he should begin life with a legal badge of shame written upon his face? Has he not the same natural right that any other child has to a fair name and an honorable place in the social order? His need of protection is far keener and his danger more pressing.

Why should the child of self-sacrificing love begin life disowned, dishonored, an unwelcome burden to the state or to organized charity, while his libertine progenitor goes gallily on his way of irresponsible dalliance with other women?

In case the child is a girl, these questions are still more poignant, infinitely more searching. The probabilities that the girl child of such a union will develop into a tragic creature of the night are strong, for without the protection of father, mother or family, it is almost a miracle when such an orphan grows to womanhood uncorrupted and secure.

The conditions of the maternity hospitals of our cities are but obscurely known, their records are elusive—and yet enough has been reported by their heads to warrant the statement that the birth of illegitimate children is on the increase and that farming them out is common and their actual murder not unknown.

It needs no special investigation to understand that the tendency of these outlawed boys is to become criminals and the tendency of these fatherless girls is to become prostitutes. How can we confidently expect the illegitimate child to grow to pure womanhood, to valiant manhood,

The acts which we call immoral or criminal are, for the most part, survivals of primitive conditions of the race, and retrogression in the best of us is terribly easy. It is natural, even, for the sons and daughters of refined and cultivated homes to yield to the alluring mystery of sex, for it is the most fundamental need of the race, inexorable as hunger. It has kept the earth teeming with the midgets we call men for a million years and must continue to do so. The wonder is not that so many girls "fall," but that so many rise above temptations. How can we expect the foundling, the branded child, to walk the straight and narrow way alone?

One of the judges of Chicago was quoted in a recent issue of the Chicago Tribune to have said that of the many cases of "delinquency" brought against girls in his court, more than 75 per cent began with the birth of a child. They were mothers by reason of a certain innocence, a certain naive surrender to the power of love. The child of such a mother should not be denied the fundamental rights of a son and heir.

There is no excuse and no reason for illegitimacy except that all laws, past and present, have been written by men and for the protection of men—women and children have been considered only so far as the male sense of justice and mercy was aroused. Man's property rights, it would seem, are more sacred than the souls and bodies of his "natural" children.

There are those who say that nothing can be done; that this evil has always existed and that it always must. This, we deny. Because a wrong has existed for a million years is no reason for its continued existence.

Walt Whitman has said, "All that the past was not, the future will be." Conditions stable throughout the centuries suddenly break up, melt and disappear, like ice from a frozen